

## Athlete Profile (National)

### Jamey Bollinger – Novice No More

Two years ago when Jamey Bollinger competed in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games as a novice, the 29-year-old Iraqi Freedom veteran received plenty of advice from his comrades. They taught him things to help with everyday life and showed him the ropes for competing in the Games. This year, Bollinger's back and he's no longer a novice. In fact, it's his turn now to dish out some advice to the newcomers.

"The most important thing is to just have fun," said Bollinger. "There are so many other people in wheelchairs that it's amazing. At the Games, everyone is in a wheelchair, so you're just one of the guys. People look at you differently when you're in a wheelchair. It's hard to deal with, but talking about it and the advice I got from other veterans made it easier when I got home."

Advice aside, Bollinger also likes to show his competitive side. He will compete in slalom, motor rally and bowling in this year's Games in Omaha, Nebraska, where he plans to crank it up a notch. "The old-timers are so advanced and have so much experience in their chairs, it's hard to beat them – but I've got to try," he said.

Camaraderie and a chance to make new connections are the thrill of the Games for this Alton, Illinois Army veteran. "There are a lot of guys I met at last year's Wheelchair Games who served in Iraq and are my age. I hope to see them again this time," Bollinger said. "The Games have allowed me to make great connections with all kinds of other veterans."

In the end, Jamey Bollinger hopes he will leave the 2008 National Veterans Wheelchair Games with great memories and, perhaps, some gold medals. He also hopes he can be an inspiration for other veterans to give the Games a try.

"You have to try everything at least once," he said. "Most of the time, if you just try something even once, you'll find that you like it."

